

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS POLICY

Subject

Inclement Weather Shelter Plan for the Homeless

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Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish an Inclement Weather Shelter Plan which will provide temporary overnight shelter in County-owned, leased or controlled facilities to homeless individuals during periods of extreme cold, when no other facilities are available for this purpose. (The County currently provides alternate facilities and services during the winter season through the Hotel/Motel Voucher Program in cooperation with all cities in the region.)

Background

According to the Regional Task Force on the Homeless, there are approximately 7,200 urban and 15,000 rural homeless in San Diego County who regularly have no place to go during a significant portion of any 24-hour period. The homeless are not a homogenous group, but consist of transients, families, runaways, the elderly, the mentally and physically disabled, alcohol and drug abusers, and vagrants. Existing public and private shelters cannot accommodate all of the homeless, leaving a significant number of that population to seek shelter on the streets where they are exposed to the elements. Due to the poor state of their health and lack of adequate clothing, many of these individuals are extremely vulnerable to the elements, especially during periods of extreme cold.

Policy

It is the policy of the Board of Supervisors to make County facilities available to the homeless as temporary overnight shelters during periods of extreme cold, when no other facilities are available for this purpose. The facilities and support staff shall be made available as appropriate. The temporary shelters will be opened to the homeless from 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. on nights when weather conditions are projected to be of a life-threatening nature. The determination to make the facilities available under this Inclement Weather Shelter Plan shall be the responsibility of the Chief Administrative Officer in consultation with the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors.

The specific facilities for consideration shall have adequate sleeping space and sanitary provisions for use as overnight shelters. The Department of General Services shall provide to the Chief Administrative Officer, an inventory of County facilities that meet this criteria. Existing sheltering agencies who possess the necessary sheltering expertise for the purpose of either providing operational input or contracting considerations shall be consulted for operation of inclement weather shelters, depending on the extent of the life-threatening situation.

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As a back-up, in the event County-owned facilities are not available, the Chief Administrative Officer will be responsible for developing an inventory of other facilities in the community that meet the County's criteria (i.e., adequate sleeping space and sanitary provisions for use as overnight shelters).

The rules and regulations on the use of the facilities will be monitored by a Departmental task force which will then advise the Chief Administrative Officer. In addition, volunteers shall be sought to augment County resources in the operation of these temporary shelters. The rules of operations of the temporary shelters shall require, as a matter of protection for the County of San Diego, the screening of individuals for weapons, drugs, and alcohol and the establishment of fire, safety and sanitary procedures.

The Chief Administrative Officer shall maintain a list of National Guard Armories suitable for use as temporary shelters and will be responsible for obtaining permission from the State of California to utilize these facilities.

This plan shall be coordinated with the City of San Diego, other cities in the region as applicable, the Regional Task Force on the Homeless and other public and private agencies as appropriate to ensure that an integrated approach to providing temporary overnight shelter to the homeless will be taken. A status report on the response to meeting winter shelter needs of the homeless is presented to the Board annually. Board Policy A-128 summarizes the County's comprehensive response to homelessness, the role of the County in providing health and social services to the homeless, and the shared responsibility with the cities in providing for the homeless.

Sunset Date

This policy will be reviewed for continuance by 12-31-09.

Board Action

8-25-87 (61)
12-12-89 (49)
5-22-90 (80)
12-5-95 (36)
01/28/03 (16)

CAO Reference

1. Department of General Services
2. Health and Human Services Agency
3. Department of Housing & Community Development